



Project shelved – Basildon Council leader Tony Ball in Gardiners Close, one of the sites affected Picture: LUAN MARSHALL 49GEV18

Long history of big delays

DEVELOPMENT at the Gardiners Lane South site has been in the pipeline – but never materialised – since 1991.

It was back then the Homes and Communities Agency's predecessor, the Commission for New Towns, first revealed plans for a business and homes park on the site.

The scheme had planning permission, but was never built due to problems with removing around 14 homes and six sports clubs from the site.

The business park plans were revived by its successor English Partnerships, which became the Homes and Communities Agency in 2008.

The new project for a business park and hundreds of houses was given planning approval in 2005, but was scrapped in 2007 after English Partnerships could not get £40million funding from the Government needed to build a new junction on the A127.

The following year the council and the Homes and Communities Agency unveiled the housing scheme for the site.

Last year a survey was commissioned by the agency to establish how many homes could be built.

Council leader Tony Ball said he believed it was this survey which concluded the scheme was not currently economically viable.

Housing development is shelved for 5 years

A DEVELOPMENT set to meet more than a third of Basildon's housing needs has been shelved for at least five years.

Basildon Council and the Homes and Communities Agency were preparing for an estate of between 2,700 and 4,500 homes to be built on land off Gardiners Lane South, Basildon.

The project was hailed as meeting a large quota of the district's target of 10,700 new homes by 2021, but the Echo can reveal the project will now not go ahead for at least five years, meaning the council will have to review how it meets its quota.

The agency, which owns some of the site, was the driving force

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behind the council-supported scheme, and is behind shelving it.

Tony Ball, council leader, said: "We got this admission from the Homes and Communities Agency nothing would happen for the next five years."

In respect of housing targets, he said nothing would happen before the elections, adding: "We might not have to review targets because the local development framework is still going on, and after the general election, the framework might be a different kind of document, depending

on which Government is in. "The Conservative green paper on planning is completely different to centrally imposed targets we have lived under since 1997."

However, if Labour remains in Government, the council may still have to find other housing sites.

Lynda Gordon, Basildon Labour group leader, said: "This is something they should be reviewing now and not waiting on

the off-chance that their Government gets in.

"This is going to give them a serious problem. They still need to meet the targets and if land that was identified is not available, they will have to look elsewhere and that could mean the green belt is under threat."

The Homes and Communities Agency said it could not comment in the run-up to an election.

This is going to give them a serious problem

Residents still in limbo

RESIDENTS who have faced nearly 20 years of uncertainty due to ongoing delays to the development of Gardiners Lane South spoke of dismay at the news.

Pauline Missing lives in one of five houses left in Gardiners Close.

English Partnerships had threatened to force them out with compulsory purchase orders before the former business park scheme collapsed.

She said: "We still have this blight over us. We can't sell up

with this over us and can't get planning permission for anything while this goes on. We can't get any real information out of the council or Homes and Communities Agency."

Lynda Gordon, Basildon Labour group leader, said: "My real concern is for the residents who live there. They have gone through 20 years of uncertainty already."

Tony Ball, Tory council leader, said the five-year delay may be of benefit to residents.

He said residents came to see him for answers before the agency admitted nothing would happen for five years.

He said: "I went to Homes and Communities Agency and said come on, these people can't keep living under this, because they can't do anything with their properties."

"It does give them some certainty, not as much as they would like, but more certainty that nothing will be done for the next five years."

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